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ART. XXI. — *Buddhist Inscription of King Priyadarsí—
Translation and Observations by* PROFESSOR WILSON,
President.

WHEN laying before the Society the results of my examination of the Girnár, Dhauli and Kapur di giri inscriptions of Raja Priyadarsí I expressed an opinion, that, although the tenor of the inscriptions was not incompatible with a leaning to the religion of Buddha, yet the total absence of any positive indication of the usual epithets of Buddha, or any reference to the peculiarities of the Buddhist system, left some uncertainty with regard to the actual creed of the Raja, and his intimate connection with the followers of Buddha.

I was not unaware that at that time a monument existed, which, if it was worthy of credit, was calculated to remove all doubt on the subject, and that the name of Priyadarsí was to be found in connection with that of Buddha in an ancient inscription, the text of which, as well as a translation, had been published in the ninth volume of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal; but I found such reason to question the accuracy of the translation, and so much difficulty in suggesting anything more satisfactory, that I hesitated to admit the fidelity of the transcript, and waited till further investigation should justify or correct the reading of the original. This has now been done, and although the text is not without its difficulties, yet there is enough sufficiently indisputable to establish the fact that Priyadarsí, whoever he may have been, was a follower of Buddha.

The inscription I refer to was found by Major Burt, upon a block of granite, about two feet in length and breadth, lying adjacent to a place named Bairath, six kos east of Bhabra, three marches north-east of Jaypur. A copy from a fac-simile was sent by him in August, 1840, to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, where, with the assistance of the Pundit Kamala Kanta, the text was printed with a translation by the late Major Kittoe, by whose talents, activity, and zeal the antiquities of India have been on many occasions successfully illustrated. In the present instance, although some of the leading topics of the inscription admitted of little doubt, yet many of the terms were so unfamiliar, and the identifications of the Pundit so very unsatisfactory, that no reliance could be placed upon the translation, and it was obviously necessary to await some further verification of the original,

especially as the stone itself had been sent to Calcutta, and deposited with the Society.

In the meantime, however, the return of Major Burt to this country has furnished us with the means of verifying the reading of the original inscription, by the communication of the fac-simile taken by him; of his own corrected transcript; and its Nāgarī representative. The fac-simile is here lithographed, the Nāgarī reading is subjoined: unfortunately, the fac-simile is somewhat the worse for wear, and besides the imperfections of the stone itself, there are some deficiencies, which, however, may be filled up from the transcript made by Major Burt before the document was damaged: the passages from the original transcript are given in double outline in the lithograph. The stone itself is in the possession of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Major Burt's Nāgarī rendering is as follows :

1. पियदसि ला (जा) मागधे संधं अभिवादे (वा) नं आह्वा
अपाबाधतं च फिसु विहालतं चा

2. विदितेवे भंते आवतकेहा मा बुधसि धंमसि संघसीतिं
गालवे चां पसादे च एकेचि भंते

3. भगवता बुधेन भासिते सवेसे सुभासिते वा एचु खा भंते
पामियाये दिसेया हेवं सधंमे

4. चिले (वा) ती के हामतीति अलहामि हकां तंवातवे
इमानि भंते धंमपलियायानि विनयसमुकसे

5. अलियवसाणि अनागतभयानि मुनिगाथा मोनेयसुते
उपतिसपसिने एचा लाघुलो

6. वादे मुसावा (1) अधिगिच्च भगवता बुधेन भासिते
एतानि भंते धंम पलियायानि इच्छामि

7. कितिबहुके भिखपाये चा भिखानिये चा अभिखिनं
सुनयुचा उपधालेयेयु चा

8. हेवं मेवा उपासका चा उपासोका चा एतेनि भंते इमं
लिखाधैयामि अभिहेतिमेजा उतंति

1. Piyadasi lá (já) Mágadhen sangham abhiváde (vá) nam áhá
apábádhatam cha phisu vihálatam chá

2. Viditeve bhante ávatakehá má budhasi dhammasi sanghasítin
gálave chám pasáde cha ekechi bhante

3. Bhagavatá Budhena bhásite savese subhásite vá echu khá
bhante pámiyáye diseyá hevam sadhamme

4. Chilo (vá) tí ke hásatíti alahámi hakám tanvátave imáni
bhante dhamma paliyáyáni vināyasamukase

5. Aliyavasáñi anágutabhayáni munigáthá moncyasuto upatisa-
pasino echá lágulo

6. Váde musává (?) adhigichya bhagavatá budhena bhásite etáni
bhante dhamma paliyáyáni ichelámi

7. Kitibahuke bhikhapá ye chá bhikháñni ye chá abhikhinam
sunayu chá upadháleyeyu chá

8. Hevam mevá upásaká chá upásoká chá eteni bhante imam
likhádhaiyáni abhihetimejá utantí.

My own transcript from the fac-simile differs in some respects from the preceding: the differences are not in general very material, and may in part arise from the difficulty of discriminating between dots and vowel marks and flaws or imperfections in the stone, and in part from corrections obviously required—thus, *chá*, with the long final vowel, is either a dialectical peculiarity or an inaccuracy for *cha* with a short final, as it sometimes appears in the original.

1. Piyadasi lá (já) mágadhe sangham abhiváde (má) nam áha
apabádhatam cha pisu vihálatam cha

2. viditeva bhante ávatake ha má budhasi dhammasi sanghasíti
golave cham (?) pasáde cha ekechi bhante

3. Bhagavatá Budhena bhásito save so subhásito vá echu kho
bhante pámiyáye diseyá hevam sadhamme

4. Chila (va) tí ke hosatíti alahámi há (ki) tavátávo imáni bhanto
(dham) ma paliyáyáni vinayasa makase

5. aliyavasáni anágutabhayáni muni gáthá mauncya súde (u)
patása pasino echá lágulo

6. váde musává(cha)m adhigachya bhagavatá budhena bhásito
etáni bhanto dhamma paliyáyáni ichelámi

7. kiti bahuke bhikhapá ye cha bhikhani ye cha abhikhinam
sunayu cha upadháleyeyu cha

8. Hevam meva upásaká cha upásiká cha etáni bhante ima(m)
likhá (pa) yáni abhi heti maja (nan)titi.

The importance of this inscription has, as might have been

anticipated, engaged the attention of Professor Lassen (*Indische Alterthumskunde*, vol. ii., p. 221), and of the late M. Burnouf. The observations of the latter exhibit that careful and cautious spirit, as well as profound knowledge, and patient ingenuity, which characterized that lamented scholar's researches. They are published in the appendix to his translation of the *Lotus de la bonne loi*, with other valuable dissertations, which have appeared as a posthumous publication. I propose to compare his renderings with those which I would suggest; and, in differing occasionally from his version, I avail myself of his own candid and just remark, that as no one can flatter himself that he can at once arrive at a definitive comprehension of these difficult monuments, so there is no one that may not hope to contribute to their interpretation.

The inscription opens with the name of the prince Priyadarśi, omitting the title, beloved of the gods, which occurs in his other inscriptions; it is followed by the syllable *lā*, no doubt the first of *lājā* for *rājā*, the second syllable being indistinct; the next words are *Māgadhe sangham*, which M. Burnouf would correct to *Māgadham*, but the syllable is clearly *dhe*, and the supposed dot or *anusvāra* may be merely a defect in the stone—the nasal after *sangha* is indistinct, but it is apparently there; the sense will not be affected—the assembly of or in *Magadha*. The next term is partially defective, but it should no doubt be *abhivādemānam*, for *abhivādyamānam*, salutable respectfully, venerable, an epithet of the *sangha* or assembly, to whom the *raja*, *āha*, speaks.

The words that follow are of less obvious construction and import; they appear to be *apabādhatam cha pisu vihālatam cha*. The Calcutta reading is *apabhadatam cha phāsu vihātān cha*. Major Burt reads “*phisu*” for the first member of the last phrase. The vowel is clearly “*i*,” but the consonant is questionable. Kamala Kanta renders these words, with the preceding, “The *raja* speaks—that the sacrifice of animals is forbidden is well known to you—spare them;” a translation decidedly wrong. M. Burnouf shows that *apabādha* occurs in *Māgadhi* texts for *alpabādha*, little pain, and that *phisu* has the sense of happiness, ease, and infers that the *raja* wishes the assembly, *peu de peines, et une existence agréable*. It is difficult to suggest anything more probable; but the explanation does not carry conviction with it: if we could read *pasu* for *pisu*, we might perhaps be allowed to render it more consonantly to Buddhist ideas, and translate the passage, the *raja* recommends to the assembly the infliction of little pain, and indulgence to animals, *pasuvihāratām*.

The second line begins *viditeva*, verily it is known, in which all

agree; but this is followed by a word that frequently occurs in this inscription, of which the use is not familiar—*Bhanto* or *Bhante*. Kamala Kanta identifies it with the Sanskrit *bhante*, but in what sense is not very obvious; thus, *viditam eva bhānte*, he translates, is well known unto you; *iccheluka bhānteh*, those who act thus; *etāni bhante*, hearing these things—manifest inconsistencies and blunders. M. Burnouf renders it throughout by *Seigneurs*, *Sirs*, considering it the Prākṛit form of the Sanskrit *Bhavantah*, the plural of the honorific pronoun *Bhāvān*, your honour, your reverence, in which I was at first disposed to concur, but have since had reason to doubt its accuracy. If any authority, which he probably had, is given by M. Burnouf, it has escaped my notice; but in turning over the leaves of a Jaina work (the *Parikramana vidhi*), which, according to Dr. Stevenson, means the Rules of Confession to a Guru, I found the word *Bhanto* in the section of the *Bārah vrata* (or Twelve obligations) repeated fourteen times, and in every instance with the pronoun *aham*—*aham bhanto*—preceding apparently some promise or admission: I declare. I promise, or acknowledge. The book is written in the *Māgadhi* of the Jainas, mixed with provincial Hindi, and is full of technicalities, which it would require a learned Yati to expound. The purport of each declaration, therefore, I cannot pretend to explain; but there can be little doubt that *aham bhante* means I say or declare—no doubt from the Sanskrit root *bhan*, to say or speak.¹

M. Burnouf is also most probably correct in his proposed rendering of *yāvatake*, for *āvatake*, citing many examples of such

¹ The following is one of the fourteen declarations in the Jain work referred to, and will convey a notion of the language employed:—"Aham bhante apachchihinaṁ maranantiyā sankhaṇā dhūsaṇā tassa vayassa ime pancha āyāra payālaṁ tam jāhā ihaloga saḥassa paṭṭhe jīviyā saḥassa paṭṭhe maraṇā saḥassa paṭṭhe kāsa bhogaṇsaḥassa paṭṭhe mābhāṇum mujh maranantiya e chhārā nānasavisayo dāsaṇasavisayo pancha-anuvayamsavisayo tinnaṇavayamsavisayo chattara-bishāvayamsavisayo bārah vrātām māṇhi gyaṇ ke bich man kari vachan kari kāya kari jo kōi dūshan lāgā hōi Bītrāgijī tumari sākhi gurudebji tumari sākhi kari dūshan lāgā hōi tassam icchāmi dukkadam." The last words are good Hindi, and may be rendered, "if there should occur any fault of mind, speech, or body in respect of knowledge with regard to the twelve obligations, should such fault occur in your conviction, passionless sage, or in your conviction, spiritual teacher, then I wish or consent (to perform) its difficult (expiation)." In what precedes we have a series of technical terms for which an interpreter is needed. For the only published work of the Jainas, the *Kalpa Sutra*, we are indebted to the Rev. Dr. Stevenson. According to him, *Parikramane*, or *Parikramana*, is going to confess to a Guru; *vaya* is used for *vrata*, and *āyāra* for *āchāra*. Sanskrit equivalents for several of the terms may be readily suggested, but the sense of the special denominations is peculiar to the Jainas.

elision. The following letter is indistinct, and may be *hi*, instead of *ha*; *má*, may be intended for *me*, or *mama*, *my*: the three next terms, which are very important, as involving the recognition of the whole Buddhist system, are undoubtedly buddhasi dhammasi sanghasi; the locative case of the páli noun, in Buddha—in dharma, or the law—and in the Sangha, or congregation. Kamala Kánta M. Burnouf agree in considering the next word *gálave*, or possibly *golave*, for the vowel marks are questionable, as representing *gaurava*, respect. The following character, *cham*, is doubtful; but *pasádo*, for *prasáda*, favour, is clear enough, and is followed by the conjunction *cha*, so that the first *chá* may be nothing more; in this way a probable meaning may be given to the sentence: "It is well known to what extent both my respect and favour (are placed in) Buddha, the law, and the assembly." The Calcutta rendering, "For those of the Buddhist faith such offering is not meet; the offering of *upasad* is best of all," is simply nonsense.

Much more cannot be said in favour of what follows: "Some there are who kill: that which the supreme Buddha spoke at the conclusion of his commandments was well spoken." M. Burnouf has more correctly, "All, Sirs, that was spoken by the divine Buddha was well spoken." There is a flaw in the stone after *Bhaga*, which may be unexceptionably filled up by *va*, making, with the following syllable *tá*, *Bhagavatá*, a usual epithet of Buddha. *E kechi*, at the end of line 2, may very probably be read as M. Burnouf proposes, *yo kechit*, whatsoever things or words, referring to *bhásite*, but the following, *blante*, will mean, I affirm.

Echu kho, M. Burnouf reads, *yo cha, khalu*, what verily; but it were perhaps preferable to read the first, *eshu*, in those things or words; and for the following *pámiyáyo diseyá*, we may read *pramoyo drisyate*, "capability of proof is to be seen—so the pure law *Saddharma* will continue for a long time." The commencement of the fourth line is much defaced; but *chila*, for *chira*, long, is clear enough; *hosatíti* is for *bhavishyati*, will be.

Alahámi hákám is the reading of Major Burt's copy, but the first syllable of the second term appears to be *há* long, and the vowel of the second is indistinct in the original. M. Burnouf proposes to render the words by *arhámi aham*, I think it right; *hákám* being met with in other inscriptions for *alíkam*. I consider this, however, as far from satisfactory, although I cannot offer anything more so. *Tava távo* may very probably be for *távat távat*, so much, to such an extent; perhaps rendering *alahámi* by *arhámi*, it might be interpreted, "I am worthy of, or fit for; I expect this to such and such extent;"

but the passage is doubtful. The Calcutta rendering is altogether absurd, and founded on an erroneous reading of the text.

The next words are apparently *imáni bhante*, but then succeeds a flaw. M. Burnouf would supply it by *dha*, as in Major Burt's *Nágarí* transcript; and this is probably correct, especially in connection with the following *paliyáyáni*; instead of the *payayáni* of the Calcutta transcript, and which M. Burnouf considers to be *paryayáni*, expositions, or injunctions, or precepts of the law, which is not unlikely, the law being that of the chief discipline, *vinayasya mukhyasa*, for *vinayasa mukasa*. Major Burt's transcript reads *mukase*. M. Burnouf would read the two words *vinaya símokase*, limites de la discipline; but, although there is some indistinctness in the original, the preferable reading seems to be that which is here suggested.

With regard to the ensuing terms *aliyavasáni* and *anágatabhayáni*, which are sufficiently distinct, M. Burnouf declares that he entertains no doubt, and translates them, "Les facultés surnaturelles des Aryas, et les terreurs de l'avenir." I cannot share his confidence; the second phrase, unarrived, or future dangers, is unquestionable; but the reading and purport of the first are by no means obvious. *Aliyavasáni* might represent *ari-avasáni*, end or destruction of, or by enemies; or if the first word be *árya*, it may be used as signifying the Brahmans: *vasa* may mean subjection to, that is, the opposition or persecution of the Brahmans. That the term implies something evil is probable from its connection with *anágata bhayáni*, future dangers.

For *muni gáthá* we may accept the songs or verses of the sage; les stances du solitaire; meaning, according to M. Burnouf, *Sákya* himself, which is rather doubtful. The first syllable of the next term is rather indistinct, but the word may be *mauneya suta*; the *sútras* of the munis. Now if these are to be connected with the notion of future dangers they must relate to the texts antagonistic to the Buddhists, and may indicate the verses of the Vedas, and the aphorisms of the philosophers, Kapila and the rest.

M. Burnouf reads, with the *Nágarí* version, the next words, *upatisa pasine e cha lágghulováde*, which he renders, "la spéculation d'Upatissa et l'instruction de Ráhula," conceiving the text to contain the names of Upatissa, one of *Sákya's* principal disciples, and of Ráhula, his son. The reading of the first is doubtful, the initial may be an "u," but it is indistinct, and the third syllable is more like *tá* than *tí*. *Pasine*, M. Burnouf would connect with *pasya*, behold, as if alluding to the views or doctrines of Upatissa; but, in that case, we should have *Upatisasa*, not *Upatisa*, and if we could suppose the insertion of an "s" after *tá* to be a blunder, it would give us *upatápasine* for *upatapasinah*,

inferior or pretended ascetics. For e chá lāghulovāde, M. Burnouf refers, ovāde to avavāda, instruction, but it would rather imply reproof; but, as M. Burnouf indicates, there is a sūtra of the Mahāvāso headed Rāhulovāda, or, as translated by Turnour, admonitory discourse addressed by Buddha to Rāhula, which is no doubt in favour of M. Burnouf's rendering. At the same time it may be allowable to give it a different construction and signification, and to render it, lāghu loka vāda, the light or censorious language of the world; a sense which would agree with what follows, if we explain musavācham as M. Burnouf proposes, doctrines fausses. The next word adhi-gichya may be an error for adhigachya, the Prākṛit form of adhigatya, having gone over, or having overcome, or refuted, rejeté.

The following passage is intelligible enough, and may be connected with the preceding: Bhagavatā Budhena bhāsito etāni bhanto dhamma paliyayāni icchāmi, I affirm these things, said by the divine Buddha, and desire (them to be considered) as the precepts of the law.

Kiti bahuko may be the reading of the following words, but the sense is not very distinct. M. Burnouf renders them, "c'est la gloire à laquelle je tiens la plus," understanding by kiti, kīrtti, fame; but this seems doubtful. The Calcutta version "you all," appears to come nearer to the sense, which is, perhaps, as many as there may be; that is, mendicants, male and female—although the designations are unusual Bhikhapā ye cha Bhikhanni ye cha instead of Bhikhu and Bhikhuni; abhikhanam is the Sanskrit abhikshanam, always, perpetually.

The fac-simile here presents a flaw, preceded by sumā, and followed by two indistinct letters, and then the legible words dhālayeyu cha; the transcript of Major Burt reads the passage as if it had been perfect when the fac-simile was taken, sunayu cha upadhālayeyu cha, which may be rendered without any violence, may they the mendicants hear and observe.

The beginning of the last line is somewhat indistinct; but it is probably as in the transcript, hovam eva, verily; so also, upāsakā cha upāsikā cha, both the male and female secular followers (are to hear and observe) those things; upasoka, for the second of these, is apparently an error: etāni, (for which), I declare, I have caused this to be written—imam li—after which, in the present state of the fac-simile there is a blank followed by several letters, some only of which are legible. Major Burt's transcript reads, likhādhaiyāmi, probably for likhāpayāmi: then follow abhihetimejā untati, words very unintelligible. They are corrected in the Calcutta version to abhimate

me cha untati, which are explained, this is my desire and will. M. Burnouf conceives untati may be an error for ukti, declaration. Professor Lassen suggests, with more plausibility, that the sentence should be abhimati me hotito; it is rather, perhaps, abhimati me hosatiti—this will be my pleasure.

Although therefore unable to offer an entirely satisfactory version of this inscription, and while hesitating to admit it as evidence, as M. Burnouf is disposed to regard it, of the existence at the time of the principal Buddhist authorities, the Vinaya, Sūtras, Gāthās, and the writings of Upatissa and Rāhula, we cannot refuse to accept it as decisive of the encouragement of Buddhism by Priyadarsi; the indications of which are sufficiently positive, setting aside the apocryphal allusions to Upatissa and Rāhula. We have Buddha designated by name, and with the title by which he is most frequently styled, Bhagavat—divine or lord. We have the Buddhist triad distinctly specified—the law, dharma—the assembly, sangha—and Buddha; and the inscription is addressed to the second, or the body of the church, in Magadha, the country in which the religion first took root and long predominated; and we have the two classes of Buddha's followers specified, the clerical, or male and female mendicants—Bhikshus and Bhikshunis—and the lay or the male and female worshippers, or Upāsakas and Upāsikās. The document is therefore unquestionably Buddhist. It is somewhat defective in being without any date. Major Kittoe thinks it refers to the convocation said to have been held at Pāṭaliputra, in the 17th year of Dharmāsoka's reign, or A.D. 309; but this is merely conjecture.

I subjoin the three translations of this short inscription, for the convenience of comparison, and for the purpose of illustrating the difficulty of interpreting such documents, and the little dependence to be placed upon the versions of the Pundits, without very careful supervision.

*Calcutta Translation.**M. Burnouf.**Proposed Translations.*

Piadasī (the beloved) Raja, unto the multitude assembled in Māgadha, saluting them, speaks thus :

The king Piyadasi to the assembly of Māgadha, which he has saluted, wishes few troubles, and an agreeable existence.

Piyadasi, the king, to the venerable assembly of Māgadha, commands the infliction of little pain, and indulgence to animals.

That the sacrifice of animals is forbidden is well known unto you : spare them ! for those who are of the Buddhist faith such sacrifice is not meet : the offering of Upasā is best of all.

It is well known, Sirs, to what extent proceed my respect and faith for Buddha, for the law, and for the assembly.

It is verily known, I proclaim, to what extent my respect and favour (are placed) in Buddha, in the law, and in the assembly.

Some there are who kill : that which the supreme Buddha spake at the conclusion (of his commandments) was well spoken.

All that has been said, Sirs, by the blessed Buddha, all that only has been well spoken : it must be shewn therefore, Sirs, what are the authorities (for what he said), in this manner the good law will be of long duration : that is what I myself think necessary.

Whatsoever (words) have been spoken by the divine Buddha, they have all been well said, and in them, verily I declare that capability of proof is to be discerned : so that the pure law (which they teach) will be of long duration, as far as I am worthy (of being obeyed)

Those who act thus follow in the right path : they will remain healthy in their faith for a long time to come.

In the meanwhile, Sirs, the subjects which the law embraces, the limits designated by the Vinaya, the supernatural faculties of the Aryas, the dangers of the future—

There are some who make blood-offerings ; but of these there are few ; this is right and proper (the Buddhist creed) : these of the faith I protect ; likewise those who keep company with the righteous and uncovetous.

For these, I declare, are the precepts of the law of the principal discipline (Vinaya), having overcome the oppressions of the Aryas, and future perils—

*Calcutta Translation.**M. Burnouf.**Proposed Translation.*

The scriptures of the Munis (the Vedas) are observed by their disciples; their future state is to be dreaded: the texts of the Vedas, in which the sacrifice (of animals) is enjoined are mean and false: obey them not.

Follow that which the lord Buddha hath commanded: do so for the glorification of the faith.

This I desire that all of ye priests and priestesses, religious men and religious women; yea, every one of you hearing this, bear it in your hearts.

This my pleasure I have caused to be written: yea, I have devised it.

The stanzas of the Solitary (Buddha), the sutras of the Solitary, the speculations of Upatissa, solely the instruction of Rāhula, rejecting the false doctrines.

This is what has been said by the blessed Buddha: these topics which the law embraces, I desire, Sirs, and it is the glory to which I am most attached.

That the male and female ascetics may hear and meditate upon them constantly; as well as the faithful of both sexes.

It is for that purpose that I have caused this to be written—such is my pleasure and my declaration.

(and refuted), the songs of the Munis, the sūtras of the Munis, (the practices) of inferior ascetics, the censure of a light world, and (all) false doctrines.

These things as declared by the divine Buddha, I proclaim and I desire them to be regarded as the precepts of the law.

And that as many as there may be, male and female mendicants, may hear and observe them, constantly as well also as male and female followers (of the laity).

These things I affirm, and have caused this to be written (to make known to you) that such will be my intention.